CHAPTER 6: A LIFETIME OF PING-PONG, THE SHOWA AMBITION

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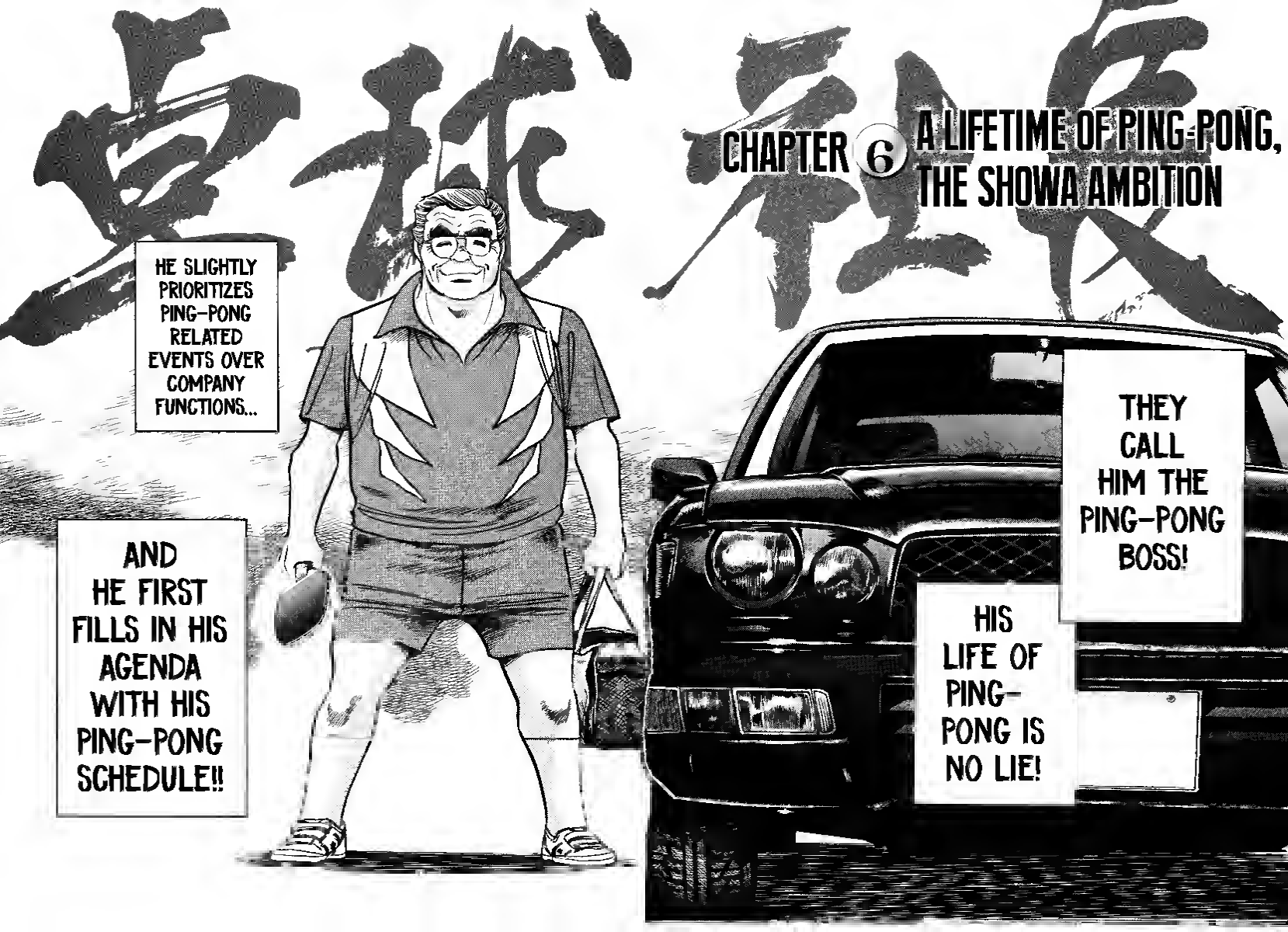
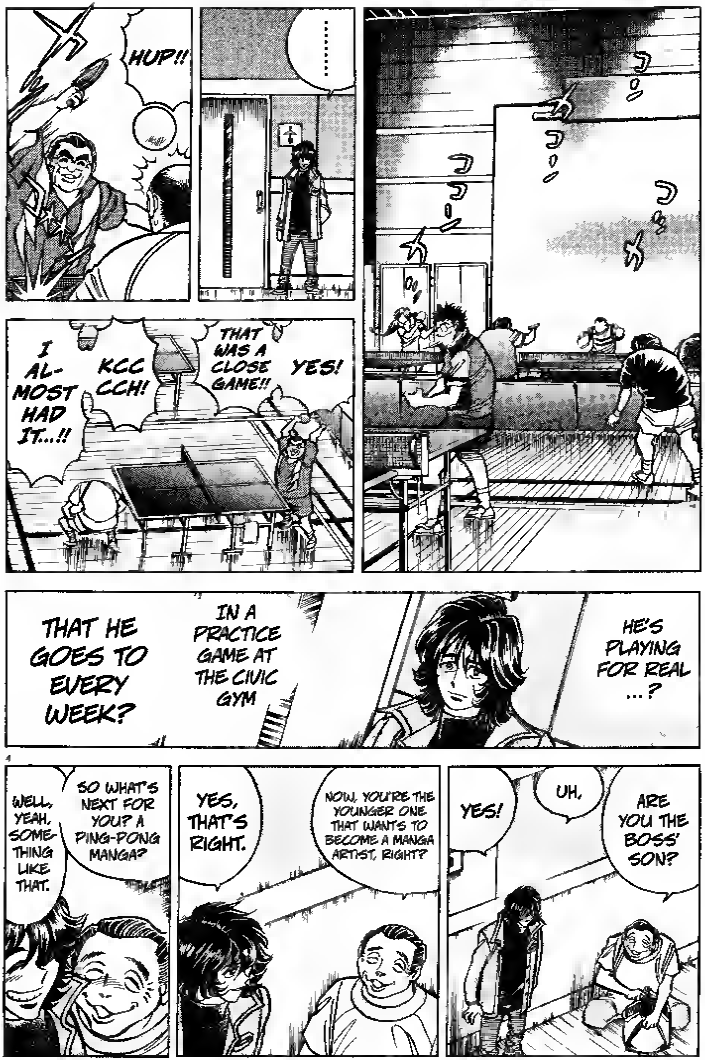
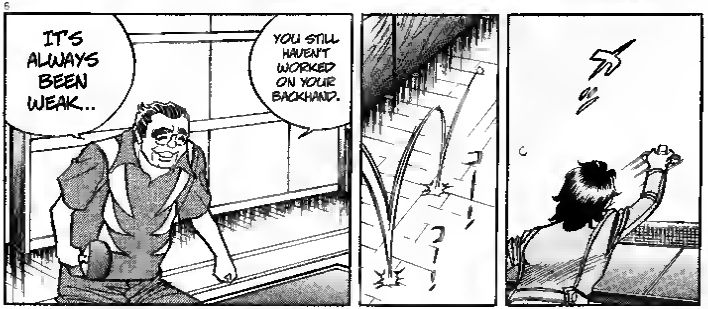

HE SLIGHTLY PRIORITIZES PING-PONG RELATED EVENTS OVER COMPANY FUNCTIONS...
AND HE FIRST FILLS IN HIS AGENDA WITH HIS PING-PONG SCHEDULE!!
THEY CALL HIM THE PING-PONG BOSS!
HIS LIFE OF PING-PONG IS NO LIE!


HUP!!
.....
I AL-MOST HAD IT...!!
KCC CCH!
THAT WAS A CLOSE GAME!!
YES!
THAT HE GOES TO EVERY WEEK?
IN A PRACTICE GAME AT THE CIVIC GYM
HE'S PLAYING FOR REAL ...?
WELL, YEAH, SOME-THING LIKE THAT.
SO WHAT'S NEXT FOR YOU? A PING-PONG MANGA?
YES, THAT'S RIGHT.
NOW, YOU'RE THE YOUNGER ONE THAT WANTS TO BECOME A MANGA ARTIST, RIGHT?
YES!
UH,
ARE YOU THE BOSS' SON?

THAT WAS THE BRANCH MANAGER OF HOKUHOKU BANK.
ALRIGHT, BOSS! I GET NEXT GAME!!
YEAH, WELL THAT'S EASIER SAID THAN DONE.
I HOPE YOU GET A HIT!
ALRIGHT, LET'S GET THIS GAME UNDER-WAY!!
AHHAHHA! I GUESS YOU'RE RIGHT! HAHHAHHAH, SORRY ABOUT THAT!!
IF HE DOES GET A HIT, HIS HEAD WILL BE SO FAR IN THE CLOUDS, IT'LL BE IMPOSSIBLE TO GET HIM BACK DOWN.
I'D RATHER YOU DIDN'T GIVE MY SON ANY IDEAS.
NO, NO, YOU WERE DOING PRETTY WELL!
I STILL CAN'T BEAT YOU!!
HUFF HUFF
YOU REALLY ARE GOOD, BOSS!!
AHHH! I CAN'T DO IT!!
5
IT'S ALRIGHT, DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT.
BUT I'M NOT DRESSED FOR IT.
ME?
HUH?
HOW ABOUT A GAME, TSUGUTOSHI?

HE'S DOING EVERYTHING HE CAN TO BECOME A POPULAR MANGA ARTIST, BUT HE HASN'T HAD ANY HITS YET AND IS JUST BARELY MANAGING TO MAKE A LIVING.
THIS YOUNG MAN IS THE PING-PONG BOSS' SECOND SON, MIZUSHIMA TSUGUTOSHI, AGE 26.


IT'S ALWAYS BEEN WEAK...
YOU STILL HAVEN'T WORKED ON YOUR BACKHAND.
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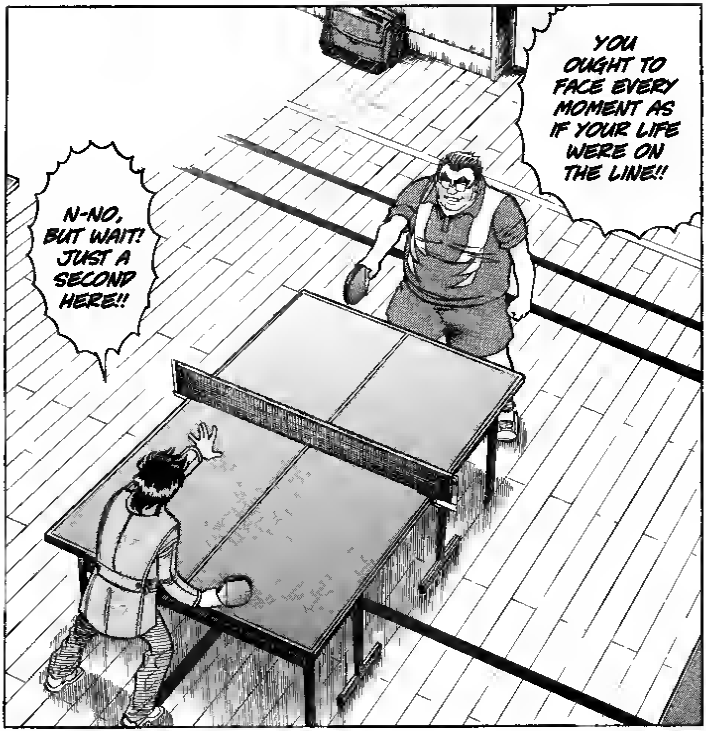
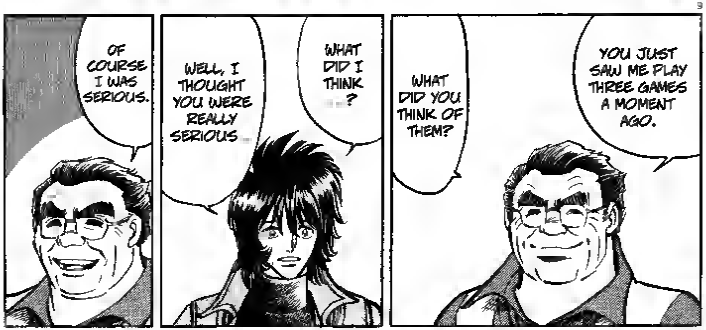
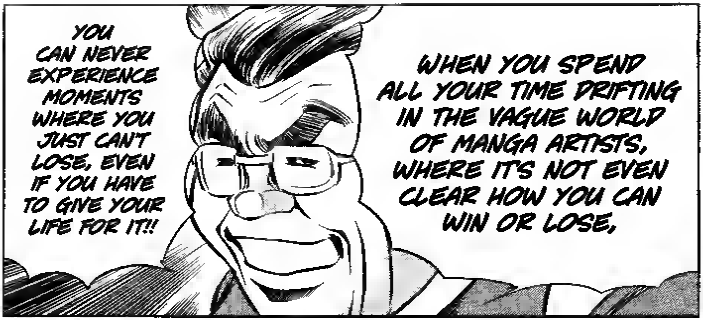
NO MATTER HOW WELL YOU CAN HIT WITH YOUR FOREHAND,
THAT'S NOT ENOUGH TO GET BY!
EVERY-THING...?
THAT GOES FOR EVERY-THING!
7
WHEN WE HAVE OUR GAME, I'LL GIVE MYSELF A HANDICAP AND ONLY USE MY LEFT HAND.
WHOEVER GET'S TO 21 FIRST WINS!
A GAME?
LET'S RALLY FOR A LITTLE BIT MORE, THEN HAVE A GAME.
AND ONE MORE THING ...
GOT IT!?

AND YOU'RE GOING TO GET SOME REAL WORLD EXPERIENCE!
THEN YOU'RE GOING TO GET A JOB AT MY COMPANY!
BUT IF I WIN THIS GAME...
IF YOU WIN THIS GAME, YOU CAN SPEND THE NEXT THREE YEARS DOING WHATEVER YOU WANT.
OVER SUCH A SIMPLE... AND RANDOM GAME!
YOU'VE GOTTA BE KIDDING ME! I CAN'T MAKE SUCH AN IMPORTANT DECISION...
NO, WAIT A MINUTE ...
HUH?
AM I UNDER-STOOD !?

O... OH...
.....!!
BUT EVERY MINUTE AND EVERY SECOND THAT PASSES BY IS OF UTMOST IMPORTANCE!
IT'S HARDLY SIMPLE...
YOU MAY NOT UNDERSTAND THIS, BECAUSE YOU'RE SO USED TO WASTING TIME,


YOU OUGHT TO FACE EVERY MOMENT AS IF YOUR LIFE WERE ON THE LINE!!
N-NO, BUT WAIT! JUST A SECOND HERE!!


YOU JUST SAW ME PLAY THREE GAMES A MOMENT AGO.
WHAT DID YOU THINK OF THEM?
WHAT DID I THINK...?
WELL, I THOUGHT YOU WERE REALLY SERIOUS...
OF COURSE I WAS SERIOUS.


YOU CAN NEVER EXPERIENCE MOMENTS WHERE YOU JUST CAN'T LOSE, EVEN IF YOU HAVE TO GIVE YOUR LIFE FOR IT!!
WHEN YOU SPEND ALL YOUR TIME DRIFTING IN THE VAGUE WORLD OF MANGA ARTISTS, WHERE IT'S NOT EVEN CLEAR HOW YOU CAN WIN OR LOSE,

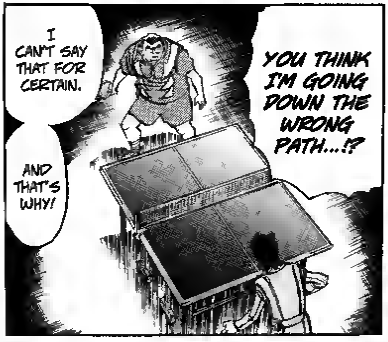
19

HUH ...?
HANG ON...
WHAT? WHAT DO YOU MEAN!?
THE FIRST PERSON I PLAYED WITH WAS SOMEONE I JUST ASKED TO BE A GUARANTOR FOR A FIFTY MILLION YEN LOAN SO I COULD START UP A NEW BUSINESS!!
MOMENTS WHERE I JUST CAN'T LOSE, EVEN IF I HAVE TO GIVE MY LIFE FOR IT!?
EXA-CTLY!

THAT'S RIGHT.. BARRING ANY EXTREME CIRCUMSTANCES, THERE'S NOTHING NEARLY AS RISKY AS BECOMING A GUARANTOR!!
IT'S SOMETHING YOU CAN'T SIGN OFF ON CARELESSLY!!
THAT'S WHY WE DECIDED WITH PING-PONG!!
WITH PING-PONG!?
HE'D SIGN OFF ON IT IF I WON!!
B-BUT WAIT, ISN'T THAT A PRETTY CARELESS DECISION IN AND OF ITSELF!?
BUT I WON!!
WAIT, WAS IT REALLY SUCH A HIGH-STAKES GAME!?

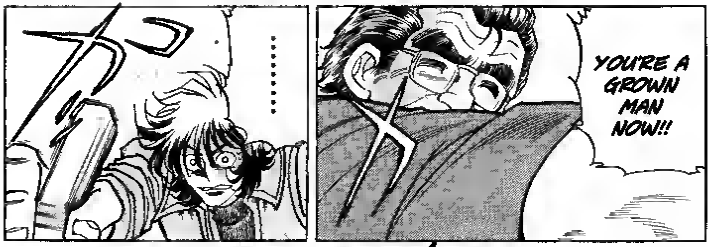
THE NEXT MAN WAS A BRANCH MANAGER AT A BANK!
HE WANTED OUR COMPANY TO TAKE OUT A LOAN WITH HIM!
THE INTEREST WAS 15% A MONTH!!
HUH?
WAIT, ISN'T THAT NORMAL ...?
NO. I WOULD'VE BEEN PLAYING RIGHT INTO THE BANK'S HANDS!
I'D HARDLY BE EXAGGERATING IF I SAID THEY WERE PREYING ON ME!
BUT HE STILL INSISTED THAT I TAKE OUT A LOAN.
SO WE DECIDED TO SETTLE IT WITH PING-PONG!!
YOU COULD'VE JUST TURNED HIM DOWN ORALLY!!
JUST TURN HIM DOWN !!
YOU FOOL !!
YOU'RE 26 YEARS OLD, BUT YOU DON'T KNOW A SINGLE THING ABOUT THE WORLD!!
SO DON'T ACT LIKE YOU DO!!

WELL, NEVER MIND... BECAUSE I'M ABOUT TO TEACH YOU!
THAT THE MOST IMPORTANT CHOICES THAT DETERMINE YOUR LIFE... ALWAYS SHOW UP IN YOUR ORDINARY, EVERYDAY LIFE!
THOSE WHO DON'T UNDERSTAND THAT WILL EVENTUALLY FACE GREAT FAILURE BEFORE THEY NOTICE IT!!
AND THAT COULD BE YOU RIGHT NOW...!!
13


I CAN'T SAY THAT FOR CERTAIN.
AND THAT'S WHY!
YOU THINK I'M GOING DOWN THE WRONG PATH...!?

YOU THINK I'M FACING A FAILURE IN LIFE!?
ME!?

BUT WHY PING-PONG!?
THAT'S WHY WE PLAY PING-PONG!!


.....
YOU'RE A GROWN MAN NOW!!

MY RE-SPONSI-BILITY!?
IT'S ABOUT TIME YOU REALIZED THE IMPORTANCE OF YOUR RESPONSIBILITY!!

14

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15
DAD!?

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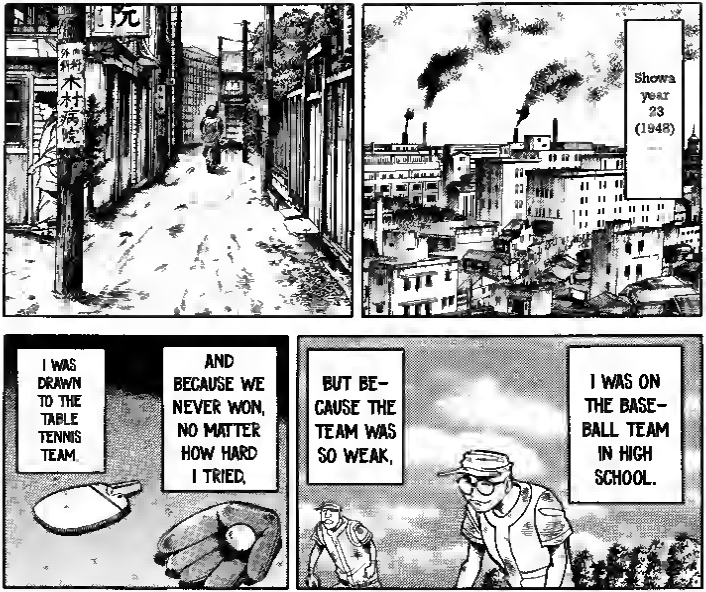
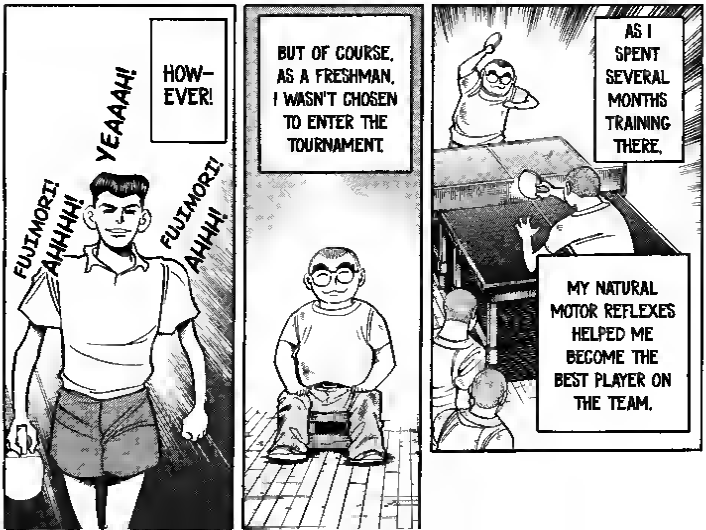
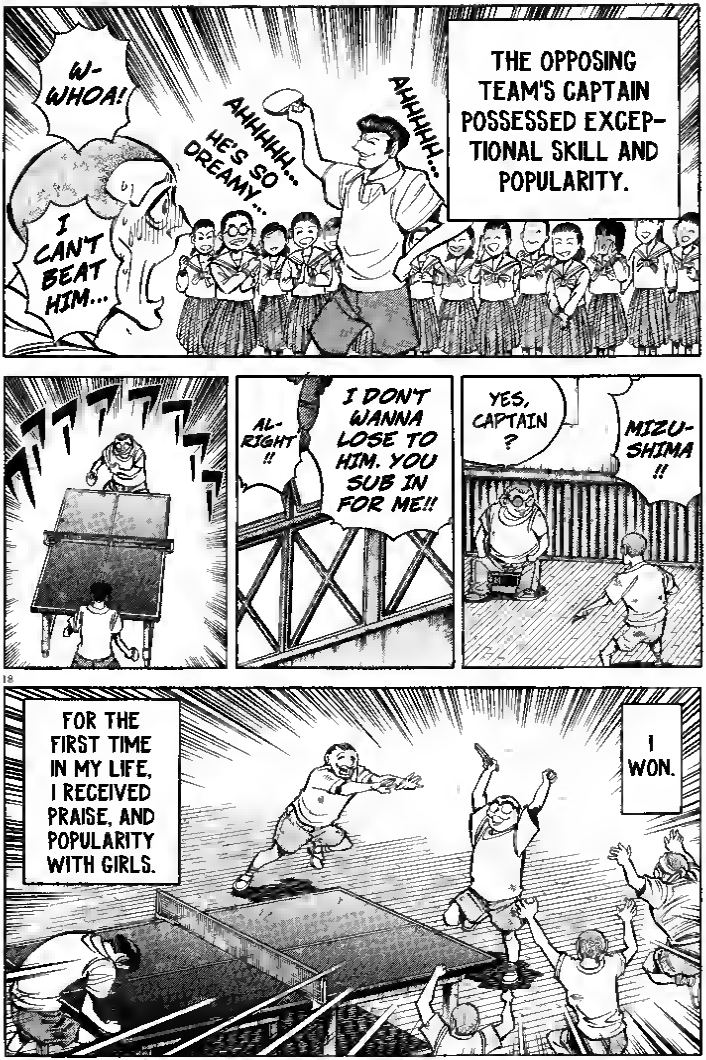
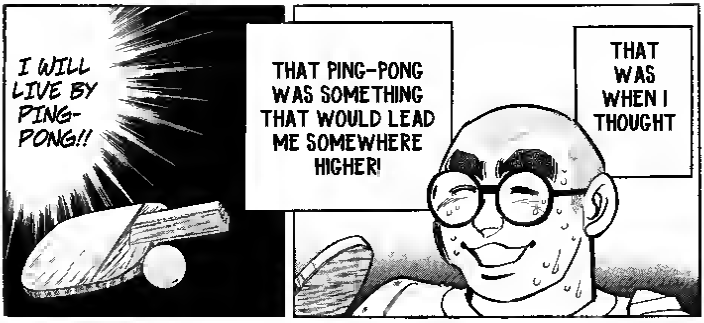
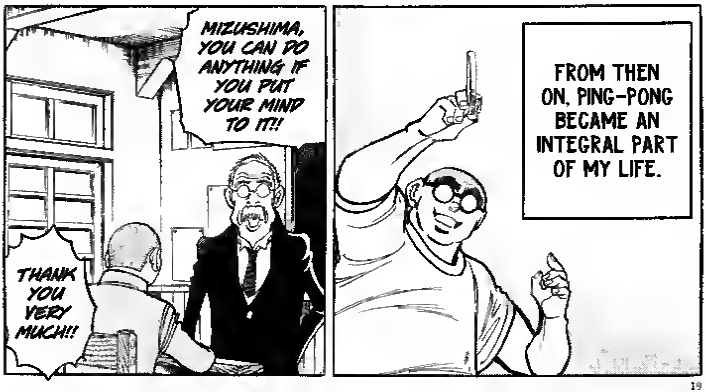
DDD
16

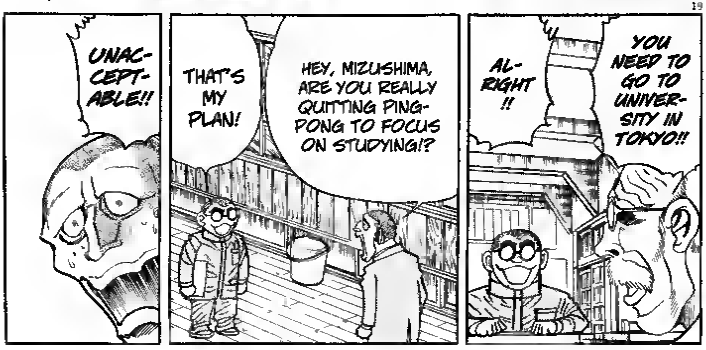

Showa year 23 (1948)
I WAS DRAWN TO THE TABLE TENNIS TEAM.
AND BECAUSE WE NEVER WON, NO MATTER HOW HARD I TRIED,
BUT BECAUSE THE TEAM WAS SO WEAK,
I WAS ON THE BASEBALL TEAM IN HIGH SCHOOL.


HOWEVER!
YEAAAH!
FUJIMORI! AHHHH!
FUJIMORI! AHHH!
BUT OF COURSE, AS A FRESHMAN, I WASN'T CHOSEN TO ENTER THE TOURNAMENT.
AS I SPENT SEVERAL MONTHS TRAINING THERE,
MY NATURAL MOTOR REFLEXES HELPED ME BECOME THE BEST PLAYER ON THE TEAM.


THE OPPOSING TEAM'S CAPTAIN POSSESSED EXCEPTIONAL SKILL AND POPULARITY.
AHHHH!...
AHHHHH... HE'S SO DREAMY...
W-WHOA!
I CAN'T BEAT HIM...
MIZUSHIMA!!
YES, CAPTAIN?
I DON'T WANNA LOSE TO HIM. YOU SUB IN FOR ME!!
ALRIGHT!!
I WON.
FOR THE FIRST TIME IN MY LIFE, I RECEIVED PRAISE, AND POPULARITY WITH GIRLS.

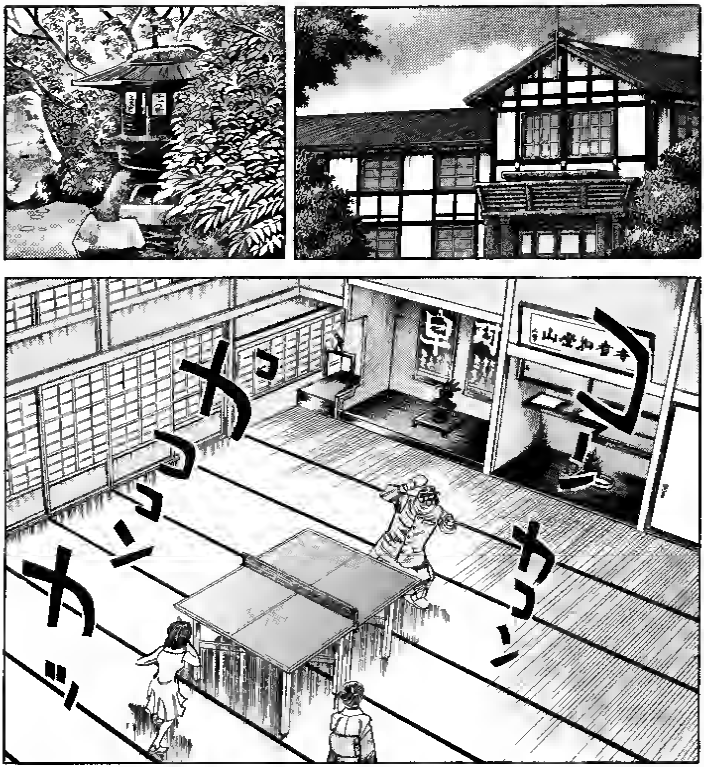

I WILL LIVE BY PING-PONG!!
THAT PING-PONG WAS SOMETHING THAT WOULD LEAD ME SOMEWHERE HIGHER!
THAT WAS WHEN I THOUGHT


MIZUSHIMA, YOU CAN DO ANYTHING IF YOU PUT YOUR MIND TO IT!!
THANK YOU VERY MUCH!!
FROM THEN ON, PING-PONG BECAME AN INTEGRAL PART OF MY LIFE.


UNAC-CEPT-ABLE!!
THAT'S MY PLAN!
HEY, MIZUSHIMA, ARE YOU REALLY QUITTING PING-PONG TO FOCUS ON STUDYING!?
AL-RIGHT !!
YOU NEED TO GO TO UNIVER-SITY IN TOKYO!!

コン
YOU'D BET-TER !!
IF YOU WIN, I'LL PUT PING-PONG BEFORE UNIVERSITY!
ALRIGHT, THEN, LET'S HAVE A GAME OF PING-PONG!
DIDN'T YOU SAY YOU'D LIVE FOR PING-PONG!?
MIZU-SHIMA...
AHHHHH, I LOST!!
I WON!
LIVE BY PING-PONG !?
BY PING-PONG !!
I SAID THAT I'D LIVE
THAT I'D LIVE FOR PING-PONG!!
I DIDN'T SAY
O-OKAY, I GET IT!!
THAT MEANS THAT PING-PONG IS TELLING ME TO GO TO UNI-VERSITY!
EITHER THAT, OR IT'S HEAVEN'S WILL, SPEAKING THROUGH PING-PONG...
AND I JUST WON IN A GAME OF PING-PONG!

ASKING ME TO COME BACK AND HELP HIM WITH HIS BUSINESS.
I GOT A LETTER FROM MY FATHER..
AND JUST WHEN THINGS WERE LOOKING UP FOR ME,
SO I WENT TO UNIVERSITY IN TOKYO,
BUT YOU CAN'T! YOU HAVE YOUR OWN LIFE TO LIVE!
IT SOUNDS LIKE HE'S IN BIG TROUBLE...
REALLY WORTH LETTING EVERYTHING YOU'VE WORKED FOR GO UP IN SMOKE!?
IS HIS LUMBER BUSI-NESS...
YES, BUT MY FATHER'S BUSINESS-!!
21
UUUUP...
LET'S NOT TALK ABOUT THAT ANYMORE. MY PARENTS ARE AT HOME, WAITING FOR US.
URK...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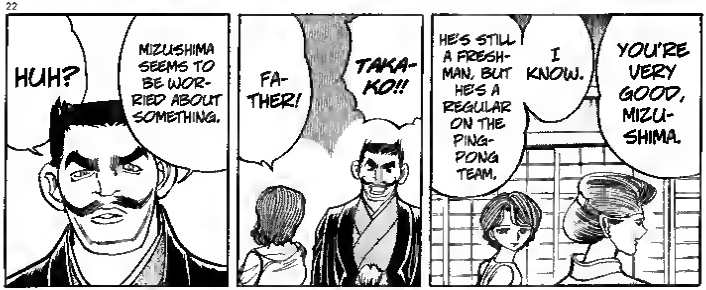
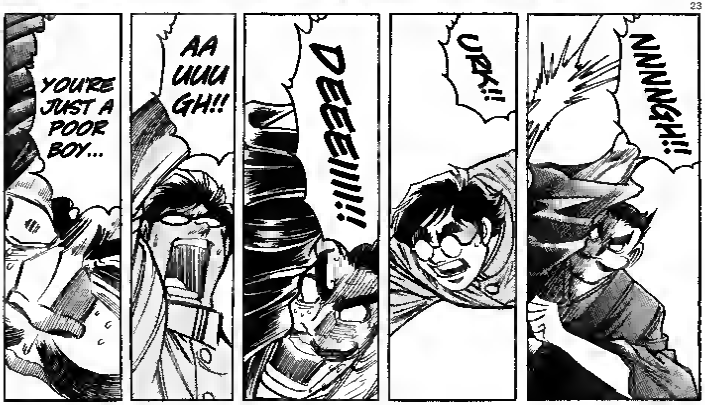
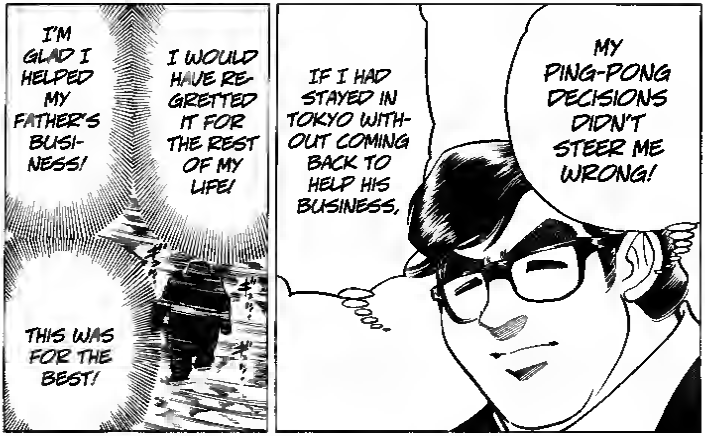

YOU'RE VERY GOOD, MIZUSHIMA.
I KNOW.
HE'S STILL A FRESHMAN, BUT HE'S A REGULAR ON THE PING-PONG TEAM.
TAKAKO!!
FATHER!
MIZUSHIMA SEEMS TO BE WORRIED ABOUT SOMETHING.
HUH?

YES, SIR! THANK YOU VERY MUCH!!
AND LET PING-PONG DECIDE WHETHER YOU STAY OR DROP OUT!?
WHY DON'T YOU PLAY A GAME WITH ME...

23


YOU'RE JUST A POOR BOY...
AA UUU GH!!
DEEE!!!!!!
URK!!
NNNNGH!!!

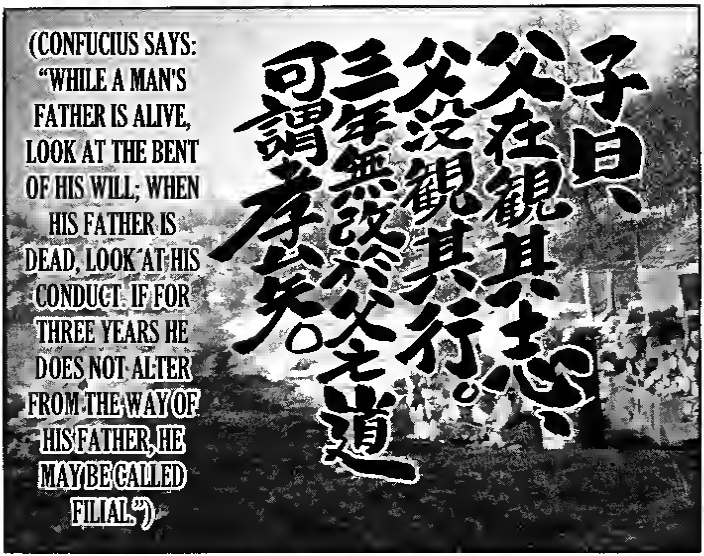
AHHHH HHHHH HHHHH HHH!
IF YOU THINK YOU HAVE ANY RIGHT DATING MY DAUGHTER, YOU NEED TO KNOW YOUR PLACE!!
BUT NEVER MANAGED TO GET IT BACK ON ITS FEET.
AND I HELPED WITH MY FATHER'S BUSINESS
SO I DROPPED OUT OF UNIVERSITY AND WENT BACK HOME
24
I MADE THE RIGHT CHOICE!
BUT ...
FIVE YEARS LATER, MY FATHER YUKIZO PASSED AWAY AT THE AGE OF 55.

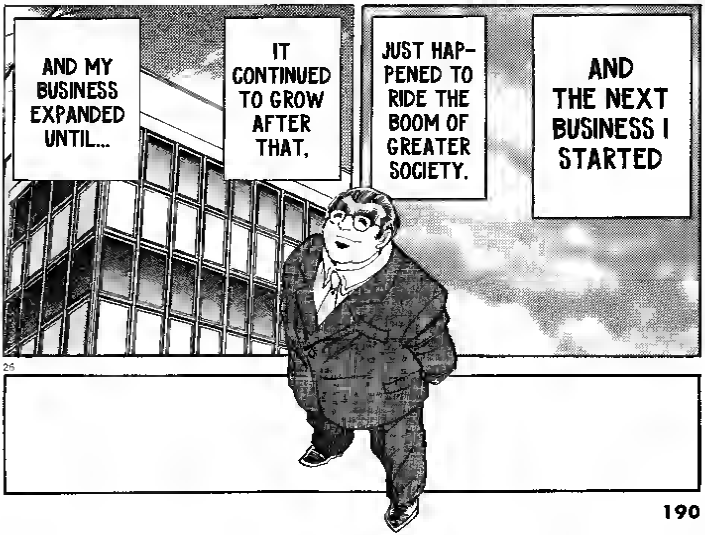

I'M GLAD I HELPED MY FATHER'S BUSI-NESS!
I WOULD HAVE RE-GRETTED IT FOR THE REST OF MY LIFE!
THIS WAS FOR THE BEST!
IF I HAD STAYED IN TOKYO WITH-OUT COMING BACK TO HELP HIS BUSINESS,
MY PING-PONG DECISIONS DIDN'T STEER ME WRONG!

I AM SO GRATEFUL!!
NOW I CAN MOVE ONTO THE NEXT STEP WITHOUT ANY MISGIVINGS...

25

THIS IS ALL THANKS TO PING-PONG!!
THANK YOU VERY MUCH!!


子曰、父在観其志、父没観其行。三年無改於父之道、可謂孝矣。
(CONFUCIUS SAYS: "WHILE A MAN'S FATHER IS ALIVE, LOOK AT THE BENT OF HIS WILL; WHEN HIS FATHER IS DEAD, LOOK AT HIS CONDUCT. IF FOR THREE YEARS HE DOES NOT ALTER FROM THE WAY OF HIS FATHER, HE MAY BE CALLED FILIAL.")

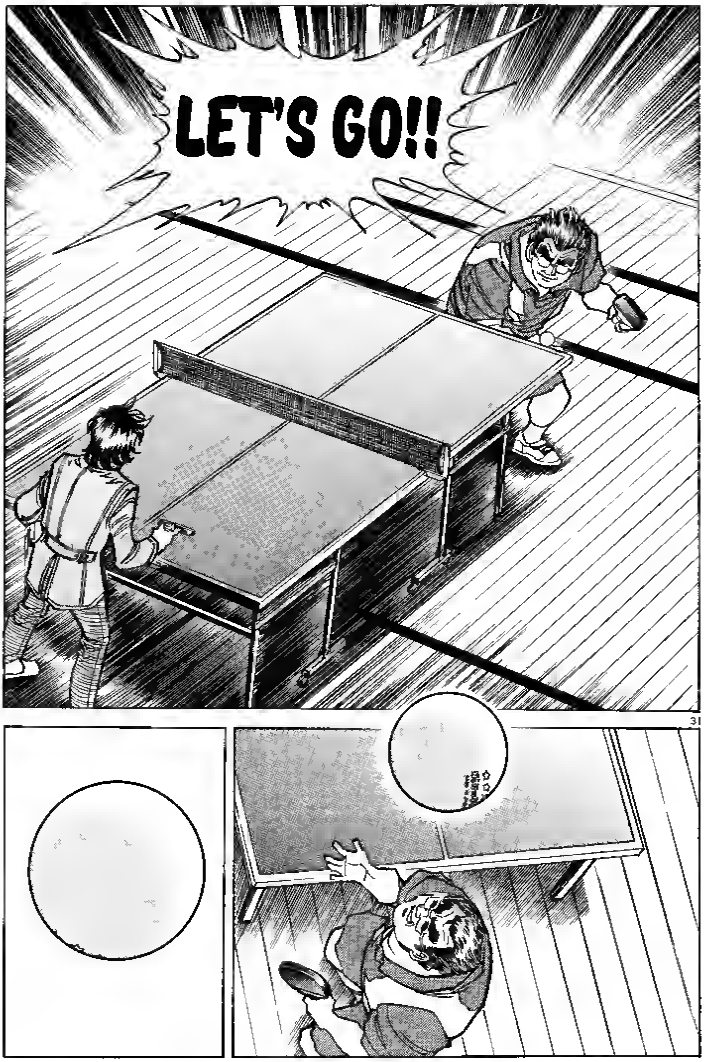

AND MY BUSINESS EXPANDED UNTIL...
IT CONTINUED TO GROW AFTER THAT,
JUST HAPPENED TO RIDE THE BOOM OF GREATER SOCIETY.
AND THE NEXT BUSINESS I STARTED
25

ARE YOU ALRIGHT, MR. MIZU-SHIMA!?
BOSS, YOU'RE AWAKE !?
DAD !!
HUH !?
I WAS WORRIED SOMETHING HAD HAP-PENED TO YOU!
THANK GOOD-NESS.
PHEW!
FINE ...
I'M...
YEAH ...
27
NO!!

WHERE ANYTHING COULD HAPPEN TO ME!!
I'M AT THE AGE
HUH?
YOU'RE EXACTLY RIGHT..!!
SHHHH! SHHHH!!
ACTUALLY, BOSS, YOU LOOK WAY HEALTHIER THAN YOUR SON, EVEN...
.....
IS THAT ALL THANKS TO PING-PONG!?
AND THAT'S WHY...
RIGHT NOW, YOU DON'T SEEM TO HAVE THE STRENGTH OF WILL YOU NEED TO DECIDE HOW YOU'RE GOING TO LIVE YOUR LIFE!
HOW-EVER!
IN THE END, IT'S YOUR LIFE!
I'M NOT GOING TO FORCE YOU!

THAT'S WHY YOU SHOULD PLAY PING-PONG!!
THROUGH PING-PONG!!
AND SEARCH FOR YOUR OWN PATH

I GET IT, DAD...
I'LL PLAY YOU IN PING-PONG!
YOU'VE MADE UP YOUR MIND!!
YEAH.
I'LL DO IT!
THERE.


LET'S GO!!
31
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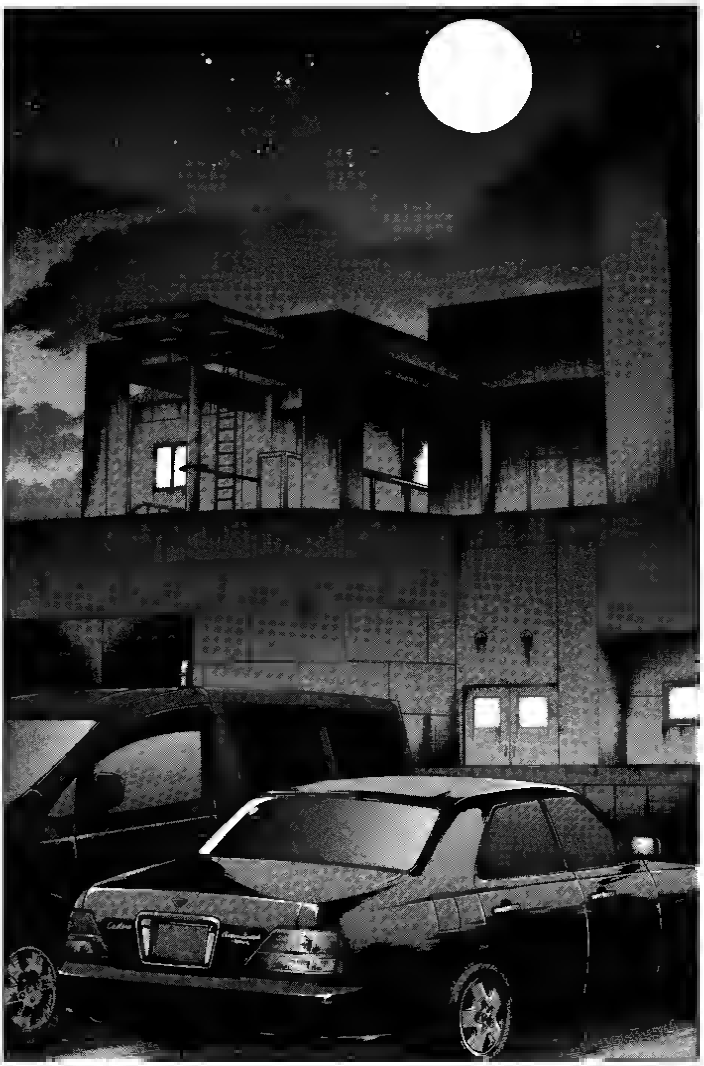
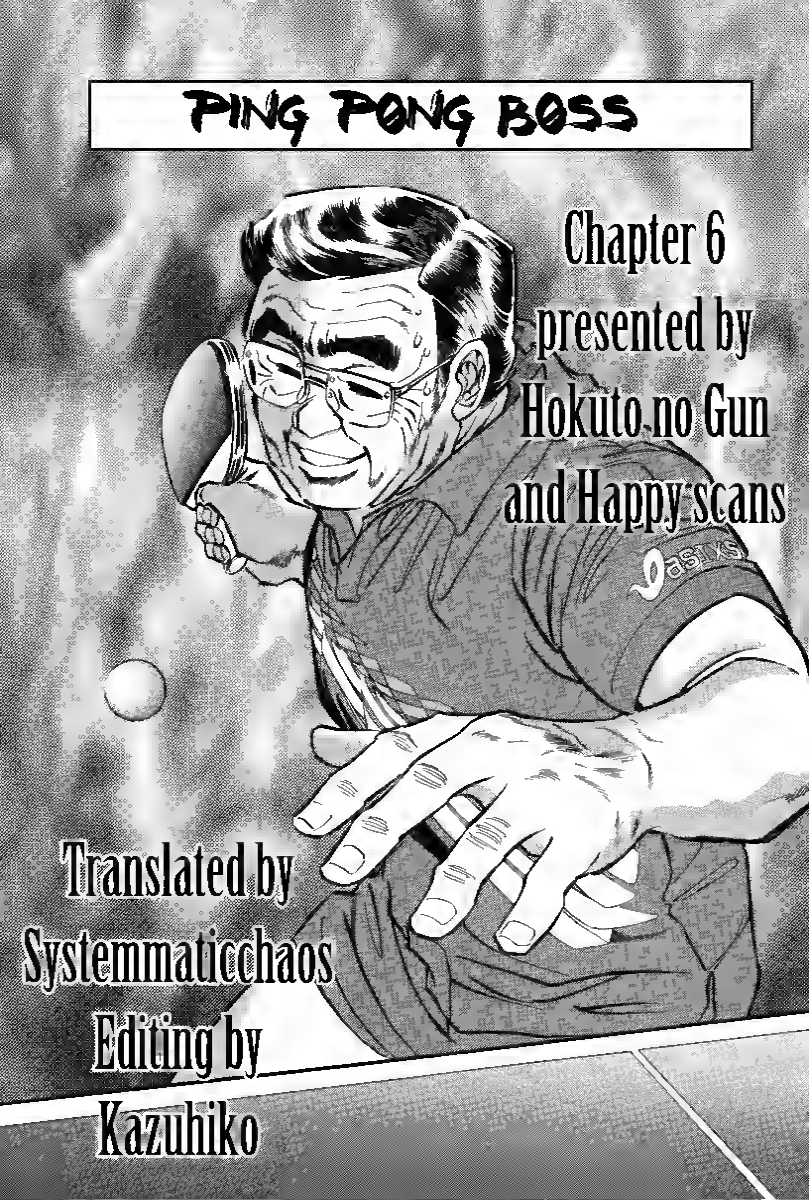


PING-PONG BOSS - FIN

PING PONG BOSS



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